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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA: LRA REPORTEDLY SPLINTERING

REF: KAMPALA 1722

Classified By: P/E Chief Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)
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11. (C) Summary: In a phone call to a northern Ugandan politician, Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leader Joseph Kony confirmed a rupture within the LRA, and claimed that Vincent Otti was under arrest for plotting against him. GOU officials are convinced that Otti is dead. On November 7, GOU intelligence officials reported that a group of 100-150 LRA, including senior officers, deserted or splintered off from Kony. The GOU's chief negotiators expressed their concerns about the splintering of the LRA, which they believe could undermine an expeditious resolution to the LRA conflict. End Comment.

KONY CLAIMS OTTI UNDER HOUSE ARREST

12. (C) During the ongoing LRA Juba delegation consultations, some northern Ugandans have demanded that LRA leader Joseph Kony appear on the radio and explain Otti's whereabouts. Kony did telephone Gulu Local District Chairman Norbert Mao on November 8 and said that "Otti was under arrest, pending investigations. He is accused of conspiring against the interests of the LRA. There was no shoot out. I have not killed anybody." Kony said that he would not be pressured into allowing Otti to talk to the national media because "a prisoner is a prisoner." Kony accused five other commanders of plotting a rebellion against him, i.e., Okema, Odong-Lau, Pak-Pala, Otto, and defector Opio Makasi. Kony claimed that the GOU had infiltrated the LRA through Otto. Kony said the four others "have been discharged" and that they might "reach there anytime." LDC Chairman Mao told P/E Chief on November 7 that he had heard a recording of Kony discussing Otti's killing and was 90 percent sure that Otti was dead. Mao and other northern Ugandan officials speculate that Kony is lying to prevent more dissension in the LRA ranks, and that Kony chose a private call to Mao, rather than a radio broadcast, which would have been picked up by LRA in Garamba.

SPLINTERING OR MORE DEFECTIONS?

13. (C) On November 7, Emmy Allio, a Deputy Director at the External Security Organization (ESO), told P/E chief that one of the LRA's senior commanders, General Abudema, had deserted with 100-150 soldiers. The group was apparently trying to escape in the wake of Otti's reported death on November 1. Ugandan intelligence indicated that the group was headed toward southern Sudan, but could not cross near RiKwangba, which Allio said was full of Kony loyalists. Ugandan and Southern Sudanese security officials reportedly met on November 6 and have sent a seasoned officer to solidify plans to receive and/or help the LRA splinter should they be found. Uganda did not want the group to fall into Khartoum's hands, according to Allio.

¶4. (C) Ugandan intelligence speculates that the desertion has paralyzed Kony. He has not moved his camps, despite knowing that Makasi had likely given away the locations. Allio speculated that Kony was preoccupied with damage control over Otti's death. (Note: Uganda Government reports indicate that Otti died of multiple gunshot wounds received in the ambush set by Okot Odhiambo, on Kony's orders, at the beginning of October. End Note.) Allio said that sources within the LRA have said that Kony decided to arrest Otti over money issues which had raised questions about Otti's loyalty. Kony was allegedly told by Onen Powell (aka Ladit Bolgara), an alleged London-based LRA financier, that Museveni's brother, Minister for Microfinance General Salim Saleh, had given Otti "USD 20,000 from the Americans to give up." Various intelligence operatives are currently trying to contact Kony to persuade him to give up. Allio said that the GOU would likely try to make the case to Congo to give the UPDF permission to encircle the LRA and/or to pursue a military strike against its leadership, before the situation deteriorated further.

GOU NEGOTIATORS WORRIED ABOUT LRA SPLINTERING

¶5. (C) The leaders of the GOU's negotiating team, Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda and Minister of State for International Relations Henry Okello Oryem told Senior Advisor for Conflict Resolution Tim Shortley that the splintering of the LRA leadership would make the situation more dangerous. In separate meetings with Shortley, Charge, and P/E Chief on November 8, Oryem and Rugunda said that the GOU was "not jubilating" over Otti's death. Oryem explained that Kony's and Otti's rise to power was the result of the

KAMPALA 00001743 002 OF 002

splintering of Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit movement. The GOU does not want to sign an agreement with only one part of the LRA. Oryem said that any splinter groups must be dealt with immediately to salvage the progress made to date.

¶6. (C) Senior Adviser Shortley asked Oryem if there was anything the GOU and U.S. could do to deal with the apparent rupture in the LRA leadership. Oryem said that Government of South Sudan mediator, Riek Machar, needed to be kept out of the equation. He feared that if the defectors or splinter group fell into Machar's hands, Machar would pay to keep them around. Other GOU officials have expressed similar concerns about Machar, i.e., that he might take actions that could thwart the dissident LRA group from surrendering. Oryem said that the GOU was closer to GOSS President Salva Kiir than Machar. The GOU has recalled Major Richard Otal from a leadership course, and sent him to Juba to work with the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) on a plan to identify, find, and assist the LRA who are on the run.

¶7. (C) Shortley encouraged Oryem to share intelligence and information on the potential dissidents with the U.S. and U.K., countries which might be able to help locate the group if identities and satellite telephone numbers were provided. Oryem said he would ask fellow negotiator, Captain Okello, to get in touch with Otal and U.S. intelligence officials with any relevant information.

¶8. (C) Oryem told Shortley that the cause of the rift between Kony and Otti was money. He said that Kony heard that Otti was receiving funds being provided to the LRA's Juba delegates, and that Otti was buying property in northern Uganda through his relative, LRA delegation chief Martin Ojul. The infighting allegedly intensified and created misunderstandings about the USD 600,000 in donor funds for the consultations on accountability and reconciliation. Ojul received an initial installment of the donor-provided funds, approximately USD 106,000. Kony was tipped off that Ojul received funds, which he assumed were for Otti.

¶9. (C) Rugunda said the GOU believed that Otti was dead. The Government wanted the entire LRA group to surrender, which Rugunda said was more urgent than ever. The U.S. message to the LRA should be that it should take advantage of the peace process to come out of the bush. The GOU wanted an expeditious peace process because the longer it went on, the more divisions there would be with outsiders taking advantage of the situation, according to Rugunda. He acknowledged, diplomatically, that the GOU had previously discussed with Machar some of his questionable actions.

LRA NEGOTIATING TEAM DEMORALIZED

¶10. (C) The uncertainty over Otti's reported death has dominated the LRA delegation's public consultations in northern Uganda. Reportedly, Kony, through his new deputy Okot Odhiambo, has designated James Obita to lead the LRA delegation. Ojul would depart Uganda in the coming days to lead LRA consultations elsewhere in the region. The African Observers, who are traveling with the LRA on its tour, report that the LRA negotiating team has virtually no/no way of communicating with Kony, who calls them, but they cannot call him. Oryem said that the links between Garamba and the negotiators were now broken because Otti had been the one to recruit many of them.

¶11. (C) DROC official Andre Kapanga told P/E chief on November 9 that the LRA delegation was demoralized and did not have marching orders from Garamba. One member of the LRA delegation had confided to Kapanga his feeling that Otti was dead because. when the LRA delegation met with Okot Ohdiamo, just prior to its arrival in Kampala on November 1, Odhiambo was wearing Otti's expensive suit. The delegate had had the suit specially tailored for Otti in Nairobi. The delegate claimed that this was evidence that Ohdiamo had confiscated Otti's possessions, which signaled to him that Otti was dead.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) The Government's concerns about the dangers of the LRA splintering are based on past experience, and have injected a sense of urgency into the GOU. Senior Advisor Shortley advised Rugunda and Oryem that we would assist the GOU in securing the cooperation of neighbors, if reports of a large LRA defectors turns out to be true.

CHRITTON